

years. Because right now you are seeing with the rubber-stamp Congress and President Bush that the Lyndon Johnson administration and the Congress at that time has been dethroned as it relates to spending.

□ 1900

So I think it is very important that we look at that. I think it is also important to look at our plan, America going in a new direction, going into a new direction, making sure that they have representation here in this House. And this is for every American, not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just Independent, not just individuals that have decided to participate in the political process, making sure that we help working families every day and the individuals that are retired and our veterans and all of the folks that we should be fighting for in a very fierce way.

I think it is important that if you folks really want to look at making sure these oil companies no longer price gouge Americans, making sure that we have affordable health care and prescription drug care, making sure that working families are able to make a livable wage, that is something that we are working very hard on.

We are going to start with the minimum wage, moving that to \$7.25 from \$5.15, making sure that the Congress doesn't give themselves another raise. And the Democratic leader and the Democratic whip and myself and a number of members of our caucus have said, no increase for Members of Congress until the American people get an increase.

And also, what Mr. RYAN talked about a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, cutting the student loan interest rate in half so that it can be affordable for folks to go to college to be able to make a stronger workforce for us. Also, as it relates to tax breaks for those that are paying for college.

I already hit the issue on preventing the administration and those here in Congress from privatizing Social Security. And I think it is also important for us to note that all of this is on our Web site with our energy plan, our real security plan as it relates to protecting America, and our plan on investing in the Midwest versus in the Middle East, of E85 and other alternative fuels.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will give the Web site. In closing, I would just like to say that when you look at the history of the country, being an American really is an adventure. We have seen, from the inception of this country, that there have been tremendous challenges. But tremendous leaders and heroes abound in the country, all over, in the public sector, in the private sector, in education, in science, in medicine. We have seen and produced some of the greatest individuals in the history of the world, and being an American is an adventure.

The most frustrating part, I believe, in the last several years, and we have

said this before on this floor, is that after 9/11, with all of the political capital that the President had, with the whole country watching him, the best, greatest most demanding challenge he could come up with was for the American people to go out and go shopping. You know, that, I think, illustrates the kind of leadership we do not need in all of these changing times.

And so our leadership that we provide from Article I, section 1 of the United States Constitution, which creates this House of Representatives, I am excited about the possibilities, come January, that we will have, when we are running this government, at least from the House side and hopefully from the Senate side too.

But like you said, we want to use all of the talents, all the creativity, all of the ability and intellect that this country can muster to make sure we are pushing it forward. As you said, with alternative energies and investments in education and getting creative with how we are going to create wealth in the 21st century, through business incubators and some of these small business programs that we have that can go and help and retool small businesses that don't have the wherewithal to pay \$1 million for consultants to come in.

We have a public program that allows businesses to retool themselves for 80 or \$90,000. And I have had people in my office who have experienced this program. It led to tremendous job growth here in the United States.

So there are things that we can do. And I think it is an exciting time for all of us. And I very much look forward to us doing this in January. [www.housedemocrats.gov/30something](http://www.housedemocrats.gov/30something).

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it was a pleasure being on the floor with you this evening. As you know, we want to thank the Democratic leader for allowing us to have this time.

We also would say that it was a pleasure addressing the House

PERMISSION FOR COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY TO HAVE UNTIL MIDNIGHT, JULY 21, 2006, TO FILE REPORT ON H.R. 2965, FEDERAL PRISON INDUSTRIES COMPETITION IN CONTRACTING ACT OF 2005

Mr. KING of Iowa (during Special Order of Mr. MEEK of Florida). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be permitted to file a committee report to accompany the bill, H.R. 2965, no later than midnight on July 21, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

#### FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed

with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2864. An act to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

#### VACATING 5-MINUTE SPECIAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the 5-minute Special Order for the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is vacated.

There was no objection.

#### HONORING OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCHENRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be here on the House floor tonight to report to my colleagues and those who may be watching what I learned over the last long weekend. I was privileged to go with Chairman PETE HOEKSTRA of the House Intelligence Committee to Iraq. It was my first trip to Iraq. It was a very eye-opening experience, Mr. Speaker and Members, one that I won't soon forget.

Before I get started talking about that trip and some of the lessons that I learned while we were there, I would like to start with a quote. And I will come back to this later. The quote is: "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. It is their war, and you are here to help them win it, not win it for them." I am going to come back to that quote later, Mr. Speaker, because I think it says so much about some of the things that we learned while we were in Iraq. Most importantly, I will come back and tell you who it was that originally said that.

The first thing I want to say tonight, though, is an enormous thank you and congratulations to the brave Americans who serve the United States in uniform.

When you get off the plane in Baghdad, you realize what they have to put up with, particularly during the summer. When the door opens on that plane, it is like opening the door of an oven. And there to greet you are bright young Americans, and they are in full uniform, helmets, heavy flak jackets. And I don't know what the temperature was, but it was the hottest I have ever experienced in my life. And those are the conditions under which our brave Americans do their business every day. And it is not just that they do it for 8 hours a day with long lunches and coffee breaks. The folks over there are working 12 hours a day and, in many cases, 7 days a week. And I don't think there is anything that we could say here in this Congress which would ever adequately express the

thanks that we have for the sacrifices that they make for serving this country.

I should also say a very special thank you to their families. The ones that I met and the ones that I was able to talk to probably had more to say about their families and wanted to make sure that they knew that they were okay and that they were doing their jobs and that they missed home. But more importantly, many of them said that they really felt that they were doing something that was important there.

So I want to, first of all, just recognize the professionalism that we saw every step of the way. When we left Kuwait, we were flying on a C-130, and I was lucky enough to get the long straw, so I got to sit up in the cockpit. And the young people who were flying that plane, and I almost called them kids, because I don't think even the pilot was 30 years old, but they were among the most professional pilots and crew that I have ever had the privilege to fly with.

As we got closer to Baghdad, all of a sudden this young pilot and all the crew became very animated and they were paying a lot of attention to what was happening on the ground. And I quickly figured out what they were doing. They were looking for any puffs of smoke or anything that might be fired at the C-130 we were flying in.

Finally, as we got closer to Baghdad, the pilot literally turned that big, fat C-130 into a dive bomber. And they make a special approach when they landed at the Baghdad airport. And in spite of that almost dive-bomb approach, he made an incredibly smooth and soft landing. And I want to thank him for that.

But as I say, we had an opportunity to meet with a number of the folks who were serving over there. I am going to talk just a little bit tonight about one of those units, a National Guard unit from the State of North Dakota.

What they do every day, Mr. Speaker, Members, is they go out on the roads, mostly at night, and they look for these IEDs, these improvised explosive devices. And they told us that since they have been there, and they have been there 10 months, they have found 562 of those devices that they were ultimately able to have disposed of so that they caused no damage to people or to property along the roads of Iraq.

Forty-two of those explosives devices, however, went off while they were trying to work with them. Forty-two. In fact, I talked to one young man, I believe his name was Lynch, from North Dakota, and he had been involved in four incidents where the IED went off. And I really can't say enough about the people who do that kind of thing every day.

As I say, there is no way that we in Congress, there are no words that we could offer here in Congress which could repay the debt of gratitude that I think we and the people of Iraq have

to the brave Americans like that unit from North Dakota.

We also had a chance to visit a field hospital there, and it was kind of ironic because one of the people that we met there was someone that I already knew. He was one of the top surgeons at the Mayo Clinic, and I am privileged to represent Rochester, Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic. Dr. Mike Yaszemski. And Dr. Yaszemski was there and had been in Iraq since about the Fourth of July, and he and some of the other surgeons told me that they had been up since 2:00 that morning, performing surgery on five folks who were involved with an IED that night.

And later we got to go in and visit in the hospital there with some of the soldiers who had been treated. And one of them was more than happy to tell his entire story. And while they were pinning the Purple Heart on the sheet on his bed, he told his entire story and what it was like to go through one of these IED explosions. Perhaps the most moving moment, though, was, as he was telling his story, how the Humvee that he had been in had essentially been blown about 150 feet off the ground, and I can't remember whether it was he came down upside down or the Humvee came down on its side, but the vehicle was on fire, and one of his buddies, a private, said get out. You have got to get out. You have got to get out. And he said, well, I am paralyzed from the waist down. And he couldn't get out of the Humvee himself.

Now, this was a fairly large guy. I would guess he probably weighed 230 pounds. And he said that the private was a pretty small little guy. And here this private, when he realized that his buddy was caught in the Humvee and it was on fire and he hollered out that he was paralyzed from the waist down, he couldn't get out, this young private got in there and got him out. I don't know exactly how he pulled him out, but it was an amazing story. And this young individual wanted to make sure that before they loaded him on to one of the big transport planes, the C-17 to fly him to the hospital in Germany at Landstuhl, he wanted to make sure that he got a chance to say thank you to that private, because he said he saved his life.

And as he told his story, we were standing around, and I know what I was thinking. I was thinking, gee, is he going to be paralyzed for the rest of his life?

Well, thanks to the good work of surgeons like Dr. Mike Yaszemski, I am happy to report that that soldier is going to be able, as he laid there, he smiled and he says, "I can wiggle my toes." And what a happy story it was for all of us in that room.

And we owe such a debt of gratitude to the staff, including people like Dr. Michael Yaszemski from Mayo Clinic for the magic that they do and the hard work that they do and the dedication that they have every single day.

You know, the U.S. military, I think, is unmatched in the world and perhaps in the history of the world in terms of the execution of conventional war. There is little doubt that we have no adversaries in the rest of the world who can match the firepower, the training, the technology and, most importantly, the professionalism of the Americans who serve us in uniform. No one can really challenge the United States in a conventional war.

□ 1915

But as we toured around Iraq and went to several of the bases and, more importantly, as we spent time in Baghdad, it became obvious to me that the security situation was not what I had expected. As a matter of fact, we had to fly in helicopters, Black Hawk helicopters, to fly from the airport into the Green Zone. And it had been my understanding that one time people who were coming to visit, like myself and the rest of our delegation, could actually drive into the Green Zone. But somebody told us that it is now the most dangerous highway in the world. And somehow after 3 years and over \$332 billion, I guess I was somewhat surprised that the security situation in Baghdad was as bad as it is. And, again, I kept coming back to this notion that, indeed, our military is unmatched and unchallenged, I think, in the world in terms of conventional warfare. But I think we have to be honest with ourselves that our military is not well suited to be an occupation force, and probably even less suited to be involved in the nation-building business. And I think that is something that I felt and I believe other members of our delegation felt, that we are really asking our military to do some things which they are not particularly well suited to do.

And I just wanted to offer some of those observations because as we were returning from Iraq, and it is a long flight, one of my colleagues who was on the trip with us had a copy of an article, and I am going to submit it for the RECORD if it is possible, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to talk a little bit about the article, and I will enter this into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD at the end of my remarks.

What it is is a column that was written by former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, who served as Secretary of Defense from 1969 to 1973. He was also a counselor to the President for domestic affairs in the Nixon White House. And the article that I am talking about appeared in Foreign Affairs back in the November/December of 2005 edition. The title of the article is "Iraq: The Learning Lessons of Vietnam."

And in many respects, Melvin Laird is in a very unique position to talk about both the history of that but, more importantly, what we should learn from those years and how we could apply them to the situation the United States finds itself in today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read from the article because I think it says

a lot in a few sentences right here that really illustrate what I think is a conclusion and the takeaway that I had from this particular visit to Iraq.

He says: Another great tragedy of Vietnam was the Americanization of the war. This threatens to be the tragedy of Iraq also. The war needed to be turned back to the people who cared about it, the Vietnamese. They needed U.S. money and training but not more American blood. I called our program Vietnamization, and in spite of the naysayers, I have not ceased to believe that it worked."

And he goes on to say in another paragraph: "We need to put our resources and unwavering public support behind a program of Iraqization so that we can get out of Iraq and leave the Iraqis in a position to protect themselves. The Iraq War should have been focused on Iraqization even before the first shot was fired."

Mr. Speaker, I read this column on the way home, and I want to tell about where we went after we left that hospital, because we flew up and we were only the second congressional delegation since 1991 to actually go up and visit Kurdistan. And we landed there at their airport, and I was surprised. I was shocked because I, frankly, expected to be greeted by bearded warriors with AK-47s over their shoulders, and what we were greeted by were businessmen wearing business suits who were very friendly, very hospitable, and the first thing you see when you get off the plane are new buildings going up, high-rise buildings around the airport there.

And as we drove into town, and I want to emphasize as we drove into town with minimum security, I asked about those buildings. They said, These are new condominiums going up. They are luxury condominiums. They will sell for anywhere from \$250,000 to \$400,000. This is in Irbil, Iraq. This is in the Kurdish zone.

And we went into town, and we got to meet with some of the political leaders including their Parliament. It was interesting to learn that the Parliament that they have there in the Kurdish area is very representative. Over 16 percent of the members of the Kurdish Parliament are women. We even met a Christian who is a member of the Kurdish Parliament. It is very open and very pragmatic. And we met with the Prime Minister. And he is coming to Washington here in the next month or so. I hope all Members will get a chance to meet him. In fact, I think he is coming in September. He is one of the most charismatic, articulate leaders that I ever met. He was very candid with us.

First of all, he thanked us. He thanked us for all that America has done for the Kurdish people. Now, admittedly, the Kurds from a cultural standpoint are different than many of the other Iraqis, but they are Muslim. And he told us that they faced all the same problems in 1991 that the southern part of Iraq is facing today. They

had factionalization. They had terrorists. But they adopted what I would describe as a zero-tolerance policy. In fact, they described one particular incident where someone had committed an act of terrorism and then fled to Baghdad. They went after them, and they brought them to justice.

You see, they have the advantage that they speak the language, they understand the culture, but, most importantly, they know who the bad guys are. And as I sort of distilled this story, and I was surprised by the wealth of the Kurdish region, one of our colleagues said, Well, but you have oil.

And the Prime Minister smiled, and he said, The whole country has oil. He said, The difference is we have decided to work together to develop our resources so that we can have an economic future of prosperity for all of our people, whether they happen to be Christians or whether they happen to be Shiia or whether they happen to be Sunnis, whatever. And the only thing they have said is that they will not tolerate terrorism in their territories.

And there are two things that they demand from the national government: One is they will not tolerate a religious state. Even though they are Muslims, they tolerate other religions, and it makes an enormous difference in the way people are living and working together in the northern portion of Iraq.

The second thing that they said they demanded is an equitable distribution of oil royalties. And when you see what they have accomplished up there, you can understand why now that they have done all the work, they do not want to share all of their revenues with the people of the rest of Iraq.

But, most importantly, we asked him, Don't the Kurds really want to be independent?

And again he smiled and he said, Well, if you polled my constituents, I suspect that almost universally they would be in favor of independence. But, he said, that is not practical. In fact, he said, we Kurds have decided that we have our best opportunity to work with the rest of the people of Iraq and be part of a strong and united and economically prosperous Iraq.

We all sat there and listened to this, and we met with the members of the Parliament. They threw an enormous feast for us of some of the finest food I have ever had in my life. And as we sat and listened and visited and learned from them, I said to myself, and it is one of my favorite expressions, I said, Success leaves clues, and if you really want to know what Iraq can look like, you would have to visit the Kurds.

And it is unfortunate that too many of our colleagues have not had the chance or taken the chance when they visited Iraq to go up and visit the Kurds. But it is an enormous success story, and I think it is the model that if we can somehow imprint on the rest of the country and if the new Prime Minister, Mr. Maliki, will take that as

the model, adopt it for the rest of Iraq, then I think that Iraq can have a very bright future.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that the leader of our delegation, PETE HOEKSTRA, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, was good enough to invite me along and, more importantly, get me into some of the most interesting meetings I have ever been at. So I would like to yield to the leader of our congressional delegation, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I thank my colleague for yielding. And maybe we can have a little bit of a dialogue about the trip that we had.

It is kind of interesting. It was your first opportunity to be in country. It was my eighth trip into the theater, and I probably spent close to 20 days on the ground now in Iraq. And you are flying in from Kuwait, and I think you and I both had an opportunity to be up in the cockpit with the pilots. And I think the pilot, he had been on assignment a number of times, and I believe this might have been his eighth tour. It was something like that. So he spent a good part of the last 3 years flying C-130s back and forth between Kuwait, Baghdad, around the theater inside Baghdad to Jordan, probably to UAE and various places.

But what really struck me was the first two soldiers that I met, the conviction and the enthusiasm that they still felt for the mission. I mean, each time I go, the litmus test to me is kind of what are our soldiers saying? This C-130 pilot, he is flying our troops back and forth, and he says, We are here. I keep wanting to come back. We need to win this mission. We need to stay until it is done, and we are doing the right thing and we are making progress.

And I think for a couple of reasons, these folks interact with the pilot maybe not as much, but they hear the stories of our troops on the ground as to the interaction that they are having with the Iraqi people and the appreciation from the Iraqi people. And I hope this is one of the things that Prime Minister Maliki talks about next week, about the genuine appreciation of the Iraqi people for the progress and the support that they have received. They see that appreciation.

The other thing that I think they see is they see the horror of the other side. These are terrorists who attack civilians. Our troops understand their viciousness, and they understand the nature of these people, that they are not just attacking in Iraq, but I mean there is all this talk now about what is going on in Lebanon. 1983 is when our barracks were blown up, 23 years ago, Hezbollah. Even before that, terrorist groups have been attacking U.S. interests, Western interests around the globe. And I think our troops see the need to confront this and to defeat it and that they genuinely believe that if we step away and do not confront it, it will move back to the homeland.

We go on the ground to Baghdad, get met at the airport by someone who interned in my office about a couple of years ago, interned in my office, went to Hope College in my district, got to be a good friend with a number of the people in the church that we go to, so he went to our church. He is now embedded not in the international zone where you and I were, he is embedded with Iraqi troops that have been trained. So there are like eight to ten U.S. troops with a large group of Iraqi troops, and he says, Man, am I glad I am here. He hadn't been there long, but he said, You know, this is where I wanted to be. This is where I want to be right now. I am working with Iraqi troops. I have been to their homes. I have been to their families. We need to do this, and we need to see the mission through.

And like I said, he had just been there a couple of months. And like I said, this is a kid that I know. If he did not feel that way, he would have told me. But he had just gotten there, and they also see the sacrifices that the Iraqi people are making.

□ 1930

There have been a lot more Iraqi troops, police and citizens that have been killed over the last number of months than U.S. troops. They are willing to go to the front lines. They are willing to pay the price and make the difference.

You and I both saw, there is lots of work to be done. It is not a pretty picture on certain occasions. The day we were there, the folks went in and got the chairman of the National Olympic Committee.

Maybe you have talked a little bit about some of the other things we observed. We can talk about the training of the troops, the need to secure Baghdad. I heard you talk about Kurdistan. But there is lots of work to do. It is two steps forward, one step back. But it is clearly a war against radical Islam that is moving forward, that needs to be completed.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I was talking about the Kurds, and I think every part of the trip, in my opinion, was a highlight. I hate to say one was more important than the other.

But what I had said before you came in, Congressman HOEKSTRA, was that I was so impressed with the Kurds and what they have done in taking responsibility for their own area, of having essentially a zero tolerance policy. I said that I think that may be the example that Maliki can use for the rest of the country. You mentioned, and this is what I think is the good story.

The bad story, from my view, is that Baghdad is far less secure than I thought it was. Maybe that is my fault. Maybe I had a different impression. Maybe I had been led to believe. I am not sure, and I am not really in the blame game.

But clearly Baghdad is still a very dangerous place. In fact, I think the

phrase that some of them used is the road from the airport to the international zone is the most dangerous highway in the world. Maybe that is an exaggeration. But those are Americans who are serving there that used that term.

My takeaway is probably somewhat different than yours, but my conclusion and my takeaway is we need to press and continue to press for the Iraqis and exactly what you are talking about, where we have some of our Special Forces embedded and working with and training Iraqis. We trained, I think the number is 262,000 Iraqis so far. We need to really push them to step up, as they have in the northern parts of the country, to take responsibility for policing their own streets.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. If the gentleman will yield, that is a conclusion that we probably reached on a bipartisan basis, that it is absolutely essential to as rapidly as possible train up the Iraqis and transfer sections of the country to Iraqi troops with U.S. advisers. They know the neighborhood, they know the culture, and I think they have the desire and conviction to win. We need to provide them with the training and the resources, but then get them at the front lines so that the Iraqi people in the communities see them. This is their opportunity to get the country back.

I think the other thing you said, it was my first time to Kurdistan. There was never a need to go there before. Now you can see what happens in a period of 14 years. Remember, what was the number, 182,000 Kurds had been killed by Saddam. Iran was active in creating mischief. There was an ethnic cleansing going on in the southern part of Kurdistan.

But over a period of 14 years, they have got political stability. The two major parties have come together to form a unity government, the economy is doing well and the security situation is good.

So if the rest of the country can see Kurdistan as a model and embrace the kinds of reforms, I think that is the other thing that happened in Kurdistan. They are doing the things that are attracting foreign investment and foreign confidence in what they are doing. Because you cannot rebuild Iraq with just U.S. money. You need to get the private sector coming in, and Kurdistan is doing that in the laws they are shaping to encourage and welcome foreign investment into their area. You do it in the south and the rest of the country, you have got oil, you have got agriculture, you have some manufacturing, but you have got to put in place the right legal framework.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I think you said it exactly right. When I left, there was progress. I was looking for progress. I think it is a three-legged stool. I think you have to have military or security progress.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. That is all about securing Baghdad right now.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Exactly. That is where I really was disappointed. I thought Baghdad would be much more secure than what we saw or learned about it. But you have to have military security progress, and you have to have economic progress, and you have to have political progress.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. The political meetings we had, it was very interesting meeting with the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior. The difference this time is you are meeting with people who know they are going to be in the job for 4 years. Every time I have gone before, you have always been kind of meeting with an appointed or an interim minister. Now you are meeting with somebody that has been selected, and they know they are going to be a part of this new government, which gives you a little bit more stability. The parliamentarians, obviously, representative government is a new phenomena for them and they have a little bit of work to understand exactly how that works.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Let me say, and I talked to the speaker today and I know you are working on this as well, one of the things we would like to do is invite at least a dozen of them to the United States. We may smile about our meetings with the parliamentarians, and they all had own political points of view and so forth, but, first and foremost, every Member of Congress, and I think Americans need to understand, if you are a member of the Iraq parliament, you are a hero. You are someone who has enormous courage.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. A couple of things. You are a hero, and you are a target.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Exactly. And not only are you a potential target, your family is a potential target. Most of us at one time in our political lives have had some goofball who has issued some kind of a death threat against us. Usually we don't even take it all that seriously. Fortunately, the FBI takes it very seriously, and I appreciate what they do for us every day. But in Iraq, it is a different ball game.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I would just like to reinforce the point that you made about the stories that we heard, where the people that are involved in the government, the strategy now for the terrorist groups, the insurgents, the militias, is to go after their family. You are now talking about their parents, their wife, their kids.

So it is no longer someone saying, you know, I am going to participate in this government because I think that it is the right thing to do and I know it is a risk to me. They are taking a much bigger risk. These folks have to have this dialogue with their family, saying if I participate in this, we are all at risk.

So, these are folks that are committed. The parliamentarians, when we met with them, they leave in the middle of the afternoon, because they don't live in the International Zone. They go back into the rest of the country. You

can protect them, you can protect their immediate family, but when you go out and get their brothers and sisters and parents and all that, these are people who are committed to success and there is no other way to look at it. There is no personal enrichment here.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. No. I was very impressed with the character of the parliamentarians. Hopefully, with the help of our Speaker, we can get some of them over here so that more Members of Congress can actually get a chance to visit with them, to learn from them, to talk to them and perhaps to ask them some questions.

What I was talking about earlier as well is from an article that I think we both read on the plane on the way home that was written by Melvin Laird. If anyone would like a copy, they can just send me an e-mail at Gil@mail.house.gov. We will send you a copy of this article.

I think from my perspective it actually put into perspective a lot of the things we saw on our visit and why it is so important as soon as we can and as much as we can, we need to turn more of the authority, the responsibility for managing the affairs of the Iraqi people, back to the Iraqis themselves.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. It is much like what we talk about for some of our domestic policies. The longer we are there propping them up, the more we have the potential of creating a situation of dependency, where they are looking to the U.S. Government to fix their political problems, to fix their security problems and to fix their economic problems.

I think we were very clear when we met with their parliamentarians and saying we are committed to stay with you and to provide you with the opportunity to fix your political problems, to fix your economic problems and your security issues. We cannot do that, because this is your country.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. That is exactly what Melvin Laird said about Vietnam. That is why it was important to turn Vietnam, as soon as possible, back to the Vietnamese people. He said the greatest mistake was the Americanization of the Vietnam War.

I think that is something we have to be very aware of when we look at where we are today.

What I said also, Congressman HOEKSTRA, is because the Maliki government is now in place and they have a Minister of Defense, they have a Minister of the Interior, which are the two key ministries I think in terms of domestic security, now that they have those people in place, and my impression of them was they are very strong people, my impression was they understood the risks, they understood what needed to be done, and I think the next two months are going to be critical.

They have to demonstrate, in my opinion, that they really are serious, that they will deal with these militias that are out of control, they will deal

with the radicals and the others who have come in from out of country.

I think it is important that our perception, and we had very good briefings, I know that sometimes it is a little like the blind men describing the elephant, but all the terrorists are not the same. Some of them are religious fanatics. Some of them are just thugs that Saddam released from prison, and they are thugs trying to create a territory and using terror and using violence, much as Al Capone in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre did, used violence in a certain way to gain a certain amount of power in a neighborhood. So it is not as simple as sometimes we would like to pigeon hole what the violence is all about. It is about a lot of things.

But, most importantly, I think the Iraqi government now has to demonstrate, as the Kurds did, that they have a zero tolerance policy. They will hunt people down and bring them to justice.

You said something else earlier about the advantage that the Iraqis have when they are doing the heavy lifting. You said they understand the culture. One thing you didn't mention, I want to add, they understand the language. That is incredibly important. That puts our forces sometimes at a huge disadvantage, because they really don't understand.

You can't really understand a culture if you weren't raised in it. So in many cases we were asking our soldiers sometimes to do some things that are very difficult. Not that they aren't very professional and they do it very well, but there is no question that Iraqis out there policing the streets can do a much better job than Americans.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Talking about soldiers that do things well, I mean, we went to Arbil, and there were two groups of people that were absolutely outstanding. The troops from North Dakota, our colleague from North Dakota, Representative POMEROY, was with us.

These guys have the responsibility of every day being on the road 18 to 20 hours and making sure that 50 miles of highway is free from IEDs. Man, these guys are good, and they have done a phenomenal job. They had a casualty a couple of weeks ago. Our sympathy goes to that unit, obviously the soldier's family in North Dakota and the whole community.

But they are well-trained, and it was inspiring to listen to their story about we came here with a job to do and here is what we have learned and here is how we are doing it. They have experienced 42 explosions, I think about 42 explosions. The vehicles they are in are designed that the compartment where the soldiers are in survives. The wheels may fall off and the engine may go away and the transmission may be gone, but the soldiers are protected.

They have experienced 42 explosions, but they have stopped, what was it, 562

they have stopped. We saw some of the devices that they have. If you wonder how good our guys are. It means as they are going down the road, they are looking ahead and they see, I wish I had taken a piece of that copper wire, just a thin little piece of copper wire, which signals to them there is a problem here, or they see a small pile of stones that wasn't there the day before. It is not that they know exactly the stones weren't there, but it is kind of like, this is strange.

□ 1945

Then they go in with their equipment, they find it, and they disarm it, 562. Then the hospital. Wow, I mean what is it? The one soldier that came in, they gave him how many units of blood? It was something like 200.

The professionalism of the docs there, you had one there from Mayo who had just come in. The professionalism of the folks there. The thing that I was really impressed with, I think one was a doc or headed up the trauma unit, was it in Cincinnati, said, "We do things here I could not do in Cincinnati."

He said, you know, there will be books and articles written about what we are doing here that is going to be brought back to trauma centers around America, maybe around the world, because of what we are learning and how effective we are here.

We give our troops better treatment here coming in off the battlefield than what I can give them in any major metropolitan center. I mean, my hats go off to these folks.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. They have been up performing surgery since 2 o'clock in the morning. I mentioned that Dr. Mike Yaszemski from Mayo Clinic, he did not take the credit for it, but the story that we were all standing there when they pinned the Purple Heart on that young man. He had had several broken vertebrae, which is the reason he could not get out of his HUMVEE, and could not walk.

At the end of his little presentation, he told the whole story, he sort of smiled. He said, I can wiggle my toes. Now, Dr. Yaszemski did not take credit for this. I am piecing this together. Because he is a spinal surgeon my sense is that he had something to do with it.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. The other thing, the soldier saying, before I leave, they were on space-available because he was not as seriously injured as some other soldiers, he was going on to Germany. I think he was going to leave in the next 24 hours. But said, you know, before I leave I need to make sure that I call back to my unit.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. He wanted to see that private that pulled him out.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. You know, it is inspiring to see those folks and also knowing that, you know, whether it is an American or an Iraqi injured on the battlefield, that is the quality of care that they are going to get.

I think we also heard the number that, you know, the vast majority of injuries today are coming from the IEDs. These things are becoming more and more sophisticated. But, you know, it shows that the enemy is not engaging us, they are moving to what we would call asymmetrical tactics. They are not engaging us or the Iraqis directly. They are using these improvised explosive devices or they are attacking civilian targets, where fitting to their name they can create terror.

But they are also using that tactic to try to divide the country between Sunnis and Shiia. And this is why the government has to, the Iraqi Government has to step up and provide the security envelope so that the militias can be disbanded, the militias that are forming in the Shiia areas and the Sunni areas. Because our understanding, when I talked to David Pate from my district, he said, you know, when you talk to the Iraqi soldiers, they do not say, if you ask them, are you a Shiia or a Sunni, the Army is moving to the level of professionalism where they say, you know, they do not say I am a Shiia or a Sunni, what they say is I am an Iraqi.

So they are focusing on the country. That is not everybody. You know, sectarian violence is something that we are very, very concerned about. It is evident. I do not think neither you or I are saying, man, it is done. There is a lot of work to do over there.

But there continue to be signs of real progress.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I think the real progress that we are all looking for is for the Iraqis. Now that Prime Minister Maliki has got a government, and I think he needs to know that America is going to be there to support him.

You know, I was misquoted that I was in favor of immediate withdrawal. That is simply not true. What I have said consistently is America needs to be there for quite some time to come. We still have troops in Germany. We still have troops in Japan. We still have troops in South Korea. But our real role has to begin to change, so that we provide the umbrella of security.

If, for example, some militia being to mass and begin to directly confront the government or other forces, then I think from a conventional standpoint, we are in a strong position to make sure that that gets dealt with quickly and effectively. And nobody can do it better than our military.

But in terms of some of the sectarian things and the thugs who are at large in some of the neighborhoods, since we cannot speak the language and we do not understand the culture, it is just much more difficult for us to get to the bottom of that. That is where the Iraqis need to step up. That is the progress we are looking for.

When that happens, when people start to feel as secure in Baghdad as they do in Erbil, then you will see the economy begin to improve. Because, it

is obvious to me that the overwhelming majority of Iraqis want what most Americans want. They want to live in peace. They want to be able to raise their families in a secure neighborhood. They want to look forward to an economic future that is worth living.

They can do that. And that is why, again, I hate to refer too much to what we saw up in northern Iraq. But it was like night and day. It was like going to a different universe.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I think I misspoke earlier. I said the troops were in Erbil. They were in Balat. The troops were in Balat.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. We will always remember the North Dakota boys. Especially one young man, I think his name was Lynch. He had been involved in four of these explosions. And, yes, it is true the equipment they have is specially designed to sort of take the explosion and the concussion in a "V" section so that the folks inside are protected.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. It is still a real experience.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. The concussion of it and what it did to those heavy vehicles, it is amazing that they have only had one KIA. Again, let me join you in sharing our sympathies to that family and that unit, because they were obviously a very close knit unit from North Dakota.

They went to war together. They do their jobs together. They live together. They pray together. And it was inspiring to meet those young men.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I think you have also got to give a real set of kudos to the folks in the background. You know, we talk about the troops that are going out and they are finding the IEDs. We are talking to the C-130 pilots who are flying in. You and I were there. It is a harsh environment. You got the dust, you got the sand, you got more sand, and then you throw a little bit of heat on it.

When we were coming off the one plane in Erbil where we walked through the backwash of the props, it must have been 130, 140 degrees right there. Of course we were doing it for a short period of time. But you are wearing the body armor, you are wearing the helmet, our troops are doing that all day long.

The other folks, there is lot of folks over there that deserve kudos, but it is the maintenance people. These guys would say, hey, we go out, we are near an explosion, an IED, our equipment is damaged. We bring it back, our mechanics know that they need to get this fixed, because we are going out again on patrol.

They may have not a spare, but they have got another truck or another vehicle that they can take out. But, they have got to get this one working again. And the mechanics, they work 24 hours straight to get this stuff up and running.

Same thing with the C-130s. We are putting lots of hours on some of these

machines. I think the first plane that we flew in on from Kuwait to Baghdad was a 1961 C-130, from Selfridge Air Base in Michigan. And, you know, there are maintenance people back there who in this environment, that plane goes on, I think it was doing two trips that day back and forth to Baghdad.

You know, when that plane goes back to Kuwait that night, there is going to be some maintenance people all over that thing, you know, getting it back and making sure that the next morning it is going to be able to fly again.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I mentioned earlier, we also need to say thank you and kudos to the families. You cannot help but think about what the families in North Dakota must feel every day. I am sure they do not know all that that group does in terms of going out and looking for these IEDs.

But not only do the folks in uniform, they pay quite a price for us, but their families, just worrying about what is going to happen today, what is going to happen tomorrow. You just really have to admire the families. And we need to say a special thank you to them. Because, you know, the guys that are over there, they are working hard all of the time. In fact, one of the things they said was we do not mind working long days and long hours because it helps the time go faster.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. There is not much else to do. But absolutely, you know, the families pay a tremendous price with the amount of time that their husbands or wives or sons or daughters are spending in Iraq, knowing that the conditions are tough, the environment continues to be dangerous. And so there are sacrifices that continue to be made by all of these families, by the whole military family.

You know, we were talking a little bit about comparing some of the stuff that we do in the United States. One of the things that is different about the United States and sometimes moves us a little bit away from the military, but when you go on one of these trips, what really does connect you back to the military is being there with the troops.

But, you know, the military folks are so few in number to who we are as a Nation. In Israel, since there is compulsory service, and I am not promoting compulsory service, but in Israel where everyone is required to serve in the military, everyone knows and understands the risks that the soldiers, military people have to take.

That is why I think it is good for, you know, that you have reminded us of, you know, that sacrifice, because too often we are too far away and removed. And it is "somebody over there". We have got to remember, it is not somebody over there. It is a neighbor, it is somebody from our community. They love this country.

They have got a family. They go to church. They share the values that we have. And they have just chosen a different career. You know, we have got

folks who have chosen business, finance, banking, marketing, whatever. These guys have chosen a career in the military.

It is a unique career. It is a special service that they provide to this country.

□ 2000

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I am going to close up here. If you have any closing thoughts, Chairman HOEKSTRA, go ahead. Then I am going to close up and yield it back here in just a few minutes.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. No, I appreciate you doing the Special Order. I appreciate you yielding me the time and the opportunity. The one thing we did not talk about was Serbia, that on the way back we stopped in Serbia, so that we had an opportunity to see a part of Iraq that had been divided, that was coming out of a very tough time and after 14 years was prospering.

We then stopped overnight in Serbia, met with the three Presidents in Serbia at Sarajevo; and, again, there is an evolving success story that, 10 years ago, the brutal and the bitter conflict, we still have some troops there. There are a lot of Europeans, more European troops over there, but, again, they have made significant progress.

It takes a while to move from the ethnic religious strife to the steps forward. What is happening in Kosovo, or Serbia, and the region, is that the European Union finally embraced them, they have moved forward, Serbia is moving forward, Kurdistan is moving forward.

What we now also have to have is the modern Islamic or moderate states in the Middle East. They need to embrace Iraq. They need to invest. They need to have their people there, their businesses there, to show that they stand with this new democratically elected government and that they are invested in the success of a new Iraq, in what the people of Iraq are.

It is possible. It is not easy, but there are two examples of how this can work. It was very painful, but by sticking to it and moving through it, you can get to where you want to be.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to mention, and I am glad you did bring up the fact that we stopped in Bosnia Herzegovina.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I forget where I go sometimes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Sarajevo. I was in Sarajevo 10 years ago, and at that time the city was essentially in, the center city, essentially rubble. Many buildings had large pockmarks. Some of them are still there. Many, though, have been fixed; and it now is a vibrant city.

If I had predicted 10 years ago that we would see the life in the city that we saw, a lot of people said it cannot happen.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. But you can walk down, what is it called, Sniper Alley?

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Yes, Sniper Alley.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. That we could walk down Sniper Alley Sunday night, and that we could walk through the streets of Sarajevo in Bosnia, and that we could walk through the streets of Bosnia on Monday morning, and, you know, that it was a vibrant city, people sitting at the cafes, drinking coffee and getting their country moving forward. Again, problems, high unemployment rate, slow economic development, but secure.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. I think we should share the story that the general told us about the man who worked at the military facility there. Every day, when he would come to work, he would stop, and this is a Bosnian individual, he would stop and salute the American flag.

Then he would say a prayer. When he would leave work that night, he would again salute the American flag. They had a special ceremony that finally, the general said, we need to do something for that guy. So they presented him with a U.S. flag, one of these little wood cases that we have around here.

When they presented it, he literally, with tears running down his cheeks, he said, I thank God every day for America and what America did to bring peace to this city, because it was America that saved us from that war.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. It is why they are nervous about us pulling our final troops out, because we are the ones that have earned their trust, and they still look to you, and I both hope and pray for the day where the same type of result, as we see in Kosovo, as we see in Bosnia, that we can see that same kind of result in the rest of Iraq.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think there are reasons to be optimistic. But I want to close with this quote. I started with this quote tonight:

"Do not try to do too much with your own hands . . . It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them." That quote is from T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia.

In some respects, I think it is prophetic. We can only do so much in Iraq. We are doing our share. Our military is doing a marvelous job. The next step, Mr. Chairman, is up to the Iraqis.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MCKINNEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of personal reasons.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and ex-

tend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, today and July 27.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, today.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, July 24, 2006, at 12:30 p.m., for morning hour debate.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

8703. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment, Department of Defense, transmitting Notice of the decision to conduct a standard competition of the support services function performed by civilian personnel in the Department of the Navy for possible performance by private contractors, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2461; to the Committee on Armed Services.

8704. A letter from the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting an annual report entitled, "Defense Acquisition Challenge Program: Fiscal Year 2005," pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 2359b(i); to the Committee on Armed Services.

8705. A letter from the Under Secretary for Domestic Finance, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the annual report on the Resolution Funding Corporation for calendar year 2005, pursuant to Public Law 101-73, section 501(a) (103 Stat. 387); to the Committee on Financial Services.

8706. A letter from the Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank, transmitting a report on transactions involving U.S. exports to Thailand pursuant to Section 2(b)(3) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945, as amended; to the Committee on Financial Services.

8707. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's report on progress made in licensing and constructing the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, pursuant to Section 1810 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

8708. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a